

# Building Foundations for Success: Self-Awareness

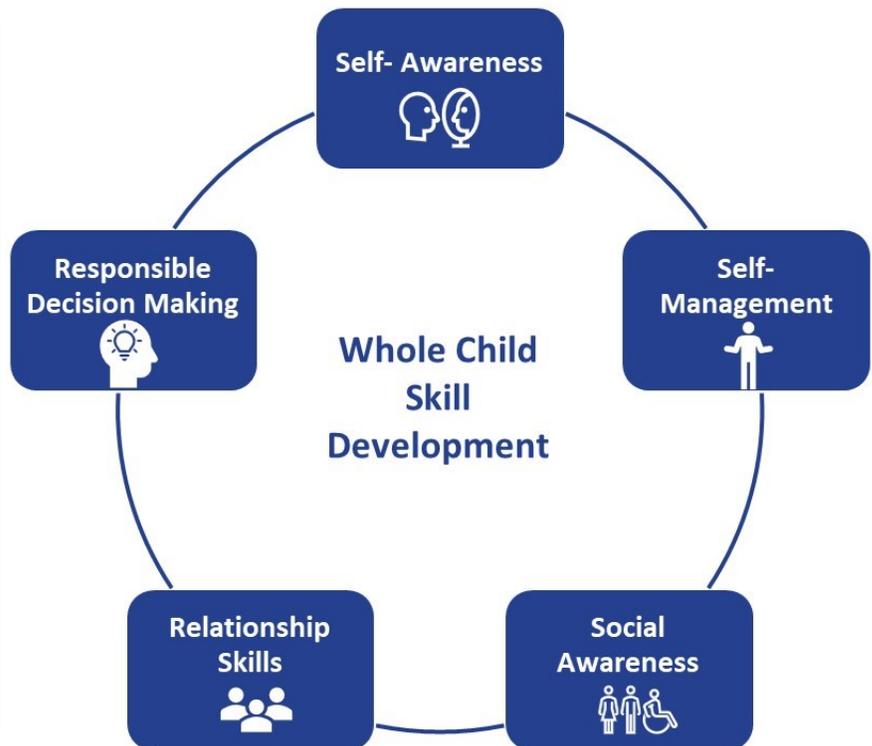
*Whole Child Skill Development*

## Self-Awareness:

Self-awareness is the ability to identify one's own thoughts, values and emotions and recognize how these shape behaviors. Self-awareness involves the assessment of one's abilities, including strengths and areas for growth.

Self-awareness skills include the ability to:

- Identify emotions
- Recognize personal strengths
- Develop self-confidence
- Develop self-efficacy



## Benefits of building self-awareness skills:

- Building self-awareness in students can lead to a better understanding of personal feelings and behaviors and how feelings and behaviors are interrelated. Students who can understand and manage their own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors are better able to sustain attention in class, follow directions, and work collaboratively with others.<sup>1</sup>
- Students who can identify their own strengths and areas for growth have greater confidence and feelings of efficacy which leads to a higher level of goal achievement in academics and with future occupations.<sup>2</sup>
- Students with social awareness skills are better able to positively interact with their peers and less likely to bully other students inside and outside of the classroom resulting in safer schools.<sup>1</sup>
- Students and adults with self-awareness skills are better able to resolve conflicts in a productive way, leading to more stable relationships and employment. Conflict resolution skills also foster safer schools and communities.<sup>2</sup>

**Whole Child Skill Development :** Developing whole child skills, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and the ability to make responsible decisions, are essential to student success inside and outside of the classroom. For more information, check out the OPI's [Whole Child Supports](#) website and the [Montana Whole Child Skill Development Competencies](#).

## Classroom Strategies for Building Student Self-Awareness:

Educators are very likely already implementing strategies that build self-awareness skills in students. The strategies below are provided for consideration and were selected by a work-group of Montana educators and child development experts as strategies that are strength-based and correspond with the [Montana Whole Child Skill Development Competencies](#). We encourage all strategies to be selected based on ease of implementation into existing curriculum, school practices, and student and educator preference.

### Grade K-2:

- Read/view age-appropriate books and/or engage in role-playing with students and discuss the emotions of the characters, labeling their emotions and discussing the events that led to the emotion.
- Post a [check-in chart](#) for students to use to recognize their emotions using visual aides.

### Grade 3-5:

- Teach students to use “[I statements](#)”: “I feel (emotion) when (the cause of the feeling)” and encourage students to ask for help when they are having trouble managing difficult emotions.
- Ask students to compose a [list of their interests and strengths](#) and share with a peer.

### Grade 6-8:

- Ask students to complete a [strengths and interests inventory](#) and journal about an area for personal growth that could be impacted by one of their strengths.
- Teach students about brain development, thought processing, and [how the brain forms emotions](#).

### Grade 9-12:

- Encourage self-compassion in teens by encouraging them to identify sources of stress and [practice self-kindness](#) strategies to help them get through challenges.
- Encourage students to practice checking in with themselves and identifying cues and strategies to set [healthy emotional boundaries](#).

## School-wide Strategies for Building Self-Awareness:

- Promote the use of age appropriate “[I statements](#)” in students and school staff and encourage the use of age appropriate words to describe feelings and emotions (example: [The Feelings Circle](#)) to encourage identifying and expressing awareness of personal feelings.
- Create and teach [school-wide expectations](#) and rules to students and school staff, ensuring that personal responsibility is included in the expectations.

## Strategies for Building Self-Awareness in School Staff:

- Create opportunity for staff to recognize personal strengths and allow staff to request professional development opportunities to strengthen areas of need.
- Provide professional development to school staff about understanding how stress and other emotions can affect the human body and one’s actions; include information on strategies school staff can take to manage difficult emotions.

Check out the [Montana Standards Association Framework](#) to learn more about Whole Child Skill Development Competencies and their alignment with other Montana academic standards.